

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SANTIA 05528 121830Z

43

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-25 SS-20 NSC-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 USIA-15 PRS-01 SPC-03

DRC-01 /111 W

----- 101969

R 121704Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6506

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 5528

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, VT, SOCI, PFOR, PINT

SUBJ: CARDINAL'S EUROPEAN VISIT AS SEEN FROM CHILE

REF: ROME 12321

1. SUMMARY. PORTIONS OF CARDINAL SILVA'S ROME PRESS STATEMENT ASSERTING CHURCH'S POLITICAL IMPARTIALITY HAVE BEEN CRITICIZED BY GOC AND ARE BEING USED BY ELEMENTS OF CHILEAN RIGHT AS SPRINGBOARD FOR RENEWED ATTACK ON THE LIBERAL PRELATE. END SUMMARY.

2. WIRE SERVICE ACCOUNTS OF CARDINAL RAUL SILVA'S PRESS STATEMENT AS ISSUED BY SALESIAN ORDER IN ROME (REFTEL) APPEARING IN CHILEAN PRESS EMPHASIZED CHURCH'S WILLINGNESS TO COLLABORATE WITH NEW GOVT AND QUOTED LIBERALLY FROM LAST SECTION OF STATEMENT WHICH REFERRED TO CHURCH'S COOPERATION IN GOODS WORKS OF PREVIOUS GOVT AND "LIBERTY OF ACTION" CHURCH ENJOYED UNDER ALLENDE. LATTER REMARKS PROMPTED SLIGHTLY VEILED CRITICISM OF CARDINAL FROM JUNTA AND UNLEASHED STRONGEST ATTACK FROM RIGHT ON CARDINAL IN RECENT YEARS.

3. JUNTA PRESS SPOKESMAN WILLOUGHBY TOLD REPORTERS NOV 6 THAT THOUGH COMPLETE TEXT OF CARDINAL'S REMARKS UNAVAILABLE HE WAS SURE WIRE SERVICE REPORTS MUST BE "MISTAKEN." ESPECIALLY
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 SANTIA 05528 121830Z

"SURPRISING" TO WILLOUGHBY WAS CARDINAL'S REFERENCE TO LIBERTY

OF ACTION UNDER ALLENDE REGIME, A GOVT WHICH HE NOTED WAS COMPLETELY "OPPOSED TO THE OBJECTIVES AND METHODS WHICH ARE THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY."

4. CARDINAL'S REMARKS HAVE SERVED AS SPRINGBOARD FOR RIGHT-WING DAILY LA TRIBUNA, CONTROLLED BY NATIONAL PARTY (PN), TO LAUNCH CAMPAIGN AGAINST HIM WHICH PEAKED IN NOV 8 ISSUE WITH FRONT PAGE PUBLICATION OF PHOTO OF SMILING CARDINAL GIVING BIBLE TO FIDEL CASTRO DURING LATTER'S 1971 TRIP TO CHILE. INSIDE ARTICLE CATALOGUES "MARXIST INFILTRATION" OF CHILEAN CHURCH UNDER SILVA'S STEWARDSHIP AND EXPLICITLY CRITICIZES HIS ATTITUDE OF "OPEN-NESS TOWARDS SOCIALISM."

5. SAME NEWSPAPER CARRIED BYLINE EDITORIAL BY EX-SENATOR FRANCISCO BULNES, ONE OF PN'S HEAVYWEIGHTS, IN WHICH HE ASSAILED SILVA FOR "HIS CONSTANT INTROMISSION INTO POLITICS." AFTER CATALOGUING ANTI-CHRISTIAN SINS OF THE ALLENDE GOVT, BULNES CONCLUDES THAT "SILVA HAS NO RIGHT TO CONTINUE USING HIS POSITION AND THE DIGNITY OF THE CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP'S OFFICE TO DEFEND A REGIME OPPOSED TO THE PRINCIPLES WHICH HE, MORE THAN ANYONE, IS OBLIGED TO DEFEND AND DIFFUSE."

6. SINGLED OUT FOR BULNES' SPECIAL IRE IS STATEMENT SUPPOSEDLY MADE IN GERMANY BY CARDINAL TO EFFECT THAT "THERE IS NO REASON TO CONDEMN THE DEPOSED REGIME NOR THE CURRENT ONE." CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC OWNED LA PRENSA PUBLISHED NOV 10 RELEASE FROM ARCHDIOCESE'S OFFICE OF INFORMATION QUOTING CARDINAL'S TELEPHONE COMMENT THAT HE HAS NOT BEEN INTERVIEWED IN GERMANY OR RELEASED STATEMENTS TO PRESS, AND REFERRING ONCE AGAIN TO CHILEAN BISHOPS' STATEMENTS OF SEPT 13 AND 28 OFFERING CHURCH'S COLLABORATION IN TASK OF NATIONAL "RECONSTRUCTION AND RECONCILIATION." LA PRENSA HAS TWICE PUBLISHED FULL TEXT OF CARDINAL'S ROME STATEMENT.

7. COMMENT. SILVA'S BRAND OF SOCIAL HUMANISM AND HIS CLOSE TIES WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAVE LONG MADE HIM THE BETE NOIRE OF THE CHILEAN RIGHT. DURING ALLENDE GOVT, AND ESPECIALLY ITS LAST YEAR AND A HALF, THE WIDE SPECTRUM OF ANTI-ALLENDE FORCES WERE MOST CONCERNED WITH USING WHATEVER STATEMENTS CARDINAL MADE (USUALLY STUDIES IN INNOCUOUSNESS) TO PROVE THAT

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PAGE 03 SANTIAGO 05528 121830Z

CHURCH WAS ACTUALLY STRONGLY CONDEMNING ALLENDE. LEFT, OF COURSE, PLAYED SAME GAME, LEAVING CARDINAL AND CHURCH CAUGHT IN MIDDLE. WITH ALLENDE GONE AND UNDER THE BENEVOLENT GAZE OF A GOVT MANY OF WHOSE MEMBERS VIEW THE CARDINAL'S LEFTOF-CENTER STANCE WITH SOME SUSPICION, THE ATTACK ON HIM HAS BEEN RENEWED AND MAY BE CONTINUED. THE LATTER IS ESPECIALLY POSSIBLE IF SILVA FOLLOWS ADVICE GIVEN TO HIM IN ROME (AS REPORTED REFTEL) TO PRESS JUNTA FOR GREATER MODERATION.

THOMPSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CATHOLICS, JUNTA, VISITS, RELIGIOUS LEADERS, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SANTIA05528
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: SANTIAGO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731139/aaaabcuf.tel
Line Count: 116
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: ROME 12321
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05-Dec-2001 by shawdg>; APPROVED <10-Dec-2001 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CARDINAL'S EUROPEAN VISIT AS SEEN FROM CHILE
TAGS: SOCI, PFOR, PINT, CI, VT, (SILVA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005